

A4/The Irvine World News/July 31, 1997

# Marines invite public to ask, comment about cleanup of ground contamination

*Open house meeting tonight at City Hall*

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The Marines will meet with the public tonight (Thursday) at City Hall to discuss a decision to not clean up 11 contaminated sites at the El Toro Marine Corps air base.

The 4,700-acre base is set to close by 1999. The open house meeting is scheduled from 4:30 to 8:30 p.m. in the conference and training center.

The Marine Corps has identified 24 sites on the base that need to be cleaned up and those sites are grouped into four project areas based on the nature of the contaminants, according to 1st Lt. Matt Morgan, a spokesman for the Base Realignment and Closure

office at El Toro.

The 11 sites to be addressed tonight have been contaminated at one time or another with volatile or semivolatile organic compounds, petroleum hydrocarbons, pesticides or metals.

But officials say that studies indicate the levels of those materials are not significant enough to cause health hazards and fall within the Environmental Protection Agency's acceptable levels, so cleanup has been deemed unnecessary at the 11 sites.

Also, it was found that groundwater at these sites isn't encountered until a depth of 100 feet, therefore it is uncontaminated.

Under close scrutiny in the studies was an area called site 25, which includes four major drainage channels at different points on the base.

The channels are usually dry, except during storms. Then the storm runoff at the base combines with runoff from

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the surrounding hills and agricultural areas and empties into the San Diego Creek.

## Contamination acceptable

An assessment was performed of the potential hazards to wildlife at the four channels, the Borrego Canyon Wash, Agua Chinon Wash, the Bee Canyon Wash and the Marshburn Channel. The study showed that contamination levels are within the acceptable ranges officials said, so no cleanup is proposed.

Tonight, officials will be available to answer questions from the public. Comments about the cleanup plans may be written and dropped off, or comments can be recorded by a stenographer.

"We got a lot of positive comments last time about this format, so we

decided to continue to do it this way," said Morgan. "The open house format allows for a free flow and answering of specific questions. Everyone can come in earlier or later and not miss anything."

The public comment period for the cleanup studies closes Aug. 16. The voluminous report is also available for review at the Heritage Park Regional Library.

The studies were conducted through field investigations, laboratory analyses and assessments of potential health risks at each location.

The studies were conducted by the El Toro Base Realignment and Closure Cleanup Team, made up of representatives from the Marine Corps, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the California Environmental Protection Agency.

SEE CLEANUP / A21

# Cleanup

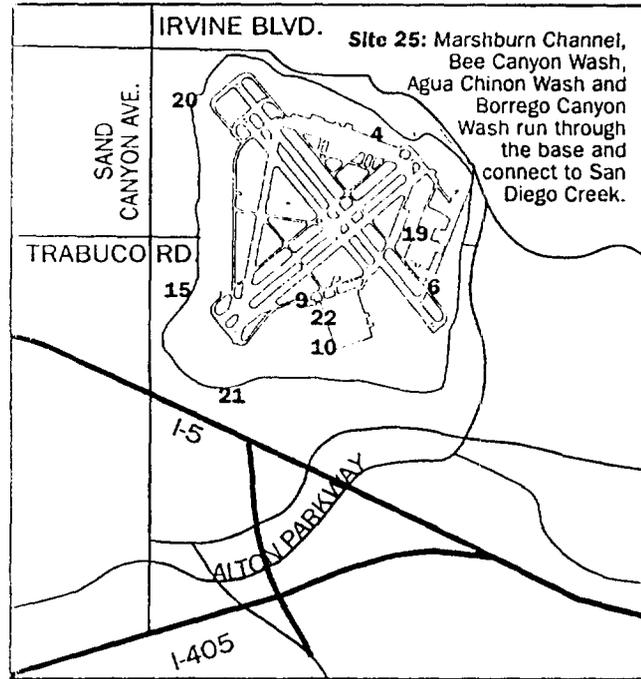
FROM / A4

The sites where cleanup is deemed unnecessary are:

► **Site 4, ferrocene spill area** — A fuel-stained area and a drainage ditch with a catch basin. Five gallons of a liquid containing an aircraft fuel additive called ferrocene were spilled onto the ground in 1983.

► **Site 6, drop tank area No. 1** — A wash area and an adjacent drainage ditch and catch basin. Jet fuel tanks were stored here after they were washed. Between 1969 and 1983, water used to rinse out the fuel tanks flowed across a concrete pad and onto an adjacent area where there is vegetation.

► **Site 9, crash crew pit No. 1** — Unlined pits used for firefighter training between 1965 and 1971 where liquids were



ignited and extinguished for fire and rescue training.

► **Site 10, petroleum disposal area** — Where used crankcase oil, antifreeze, hydraulic and transmission fluids and solvents were stored and

then poured onto the ground for dust control.

► **Site 13, oil change area** — A vehicle maintenance area where crankcase oil was drained onto the ground.

► **Site 15, suspended fuel tank area** — A haz-

ardous waste storage area and a wash rack that was used for heavy equipment maintenance.

► **Site 19, aircraft expeditionary refueling site** — Used to store fuel bladders between 1964 and 1986. In 1986, one of the bladders ruptured, spilling jet fuel onto the ground. The affected soil was immediately excavated and disposed of at a toxic waste dump off the base.

► **Site 20, hobby shop** — An outside service area and drainage ditch with catch basin used to service private vehicles.

► **Site 21, materials management group** — A fenced storage yard and catch basin used to store hazardous materi-

als, including oils, paints, solvents, herbicides and pesticides. The catch basin has reportedly been cleaned up under the base's environmental maintenance program.

► **Site 22, tactical air fuel dispensing system** — Two former aircraft fuel storage and dispensing areas where spills were reported in the past.

In May, another open house was conducted to unveil plans for cleaning up Site 24, an area under two hangars polluted with solvents used to clean aircraft for 40 years.

Contamination at the site was discovered about 10 years ago, and by that time, the toxins had

made their way into the groundwater, spreading a plume of contamination that has moved about three miles west of the air base toward Woodbridge.

The Marines plan to first clean up the contaminated ground in that area using a vapor extraction method. Once the ground is cleaned up, the groundwater problems will be addressed, Morgan said. The groundwater is being monitored through test wells.

More open house meetings are planned to address cleanup at other sites.

He said the next one is tentatively scheduled for early next year.